

A New Twist on New Hampshire History

Settled in 1623 and home to America's first naval shipyard, Portsmouth rests on the Maine border at the mouth of the swift-flowing Piscataqua River. Today, the city's aswarm with young professionals, indie bookstores, nice restaurants, brew pubs, galleries, and film festivals. Hotels have sprouted on the waterfront, and despite the harbor's salt piles and scrap heaps, there's talk of attracting cruise ships. Not bad for a formerly sleazy port in a storm once known for its beer production and brothels.

"This is one of the boutique cities of America, and it's blossoming right now," says Patricia Lynch, executive director of the

Music Hall, a 900-seat venue for concerts, visiting authors, and art-house cinema—including the annual Telluride by the Sea film fest (September 15-17 this year).



Jumpin' Jay's Fish Café on the half shell.

With its wealth of restored homes, Portsmouth has a lot in common with Savannah: "Each is a walkable city with distinct character," Lynch says.

Draws include Strawberry Banke, with living-history re-enactors and Dunaway Restaurant for American-contemporary fare; Prescott Park's waterfront concerts and theater; the Halloween parade; and the Snowflake Festival, starting December 5th. Harbor cruises and trips to the Isles of Shoals are also popular. As for eats, Ceres and Market Streets are the locus.

"People are catching on," says Jay McSharry, who

owns five Portsmouth night-spots, including Jumpin' Jay's Fish Café. "Portsmouth is the place to stop off on your way up to Maine," he says. Or, to never leave. —ETHAN GILSDORF

LOGISTICS: Area code: 603. Portsmouth is an hour's drive north of Boston and south of Portland, Maine. A short walk to downtown is the Sise Inn, 40 Court St.; 433-1200; www.siseinn.com; from \$119. Dunaway Restaurant at Strawberry Banke, 66 Marcy St.; 373-6112; www.dunawayrestaurant.com. Jumpin' Jay's Fish Café, 150 Congress St.; 766-3474; www.jumpinjay.com. The Music Hall, 28 Chestnut St.; 436-2400; www.themusichall.org.